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SATPANTH LITERATURE IN KHOJKI MANUSCRIPTS

Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali

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INTRODUCTION

ttle is known today about the early history of Nizari Ismaili Da'wa in the Indian subcontinent. Except w brief mentions in the writings of that period, most of our information regarding the preaching of sm, the development of Ginanic literature and the Pirs and Sayyeds who composed them is internal, that is, it is mentioned in their works. While there is a general agreement amongst the scholars that the works that have survived to the present time represent only a fraction of what was originally composed. At present, there is no way of knowing how many works were originally composed. However, it is reasonable to assume that up to the time of Pir Tajdin (d.1467) and Sayyed Imam Shah (d.1512), complete treaties of the works of earlier Pirs must have existed. We get a clue from a verse of a Ginan composed by Pir Tajdin;

Varann chhatris soor baitali bhakhia,

Berada kan-e na surann, ho jir-e bhai. [1]

translation:

We have explained in thirty six languages and

fourty two melodies,

And yet the deaf would not listen, O my brother.

Extrapolating on this verse, if one were to do a linguistic analysis of the present corpus one would expect to come across words from thirty six languages. My study so far, has revealed not more than fifteen languages. Thus, it would be safe to conclude that what we have today is less than half of the original corpus.

There seems a general conception amongst modern scholars [2,3] that Ginans were originally preserved orally and put to writing at a much later date, perhaps centuries later. However , if one were to examine the internal evidence, it is apparent that they were written down from the time they were composed. In fact, they were preserved both orally and in writing. Some verses from various Ginans are quoted below to support this view.

(a) Vimras and Surbann wrote down (akhar kiya) whatever Pir Shamsh had imparted. [4]

(b) Reading (vanchiy-e) the Ginans of Pirs, with the understanding gained, you shall attain salvation. [5]

(c) Even the ones who will read (vanchash-e) the Ginans will develop a sense of superiority. [6]

(d) One who listens Girbhavali and reads (vanch-e) its theme will be rewarded an eternal place in the abode of immortals. [7]

(e) I have written (likh-di) all matters in it. [8]

(f) All essences are written (likhiya) in it. [9]

(g) One who reads (pad-e) (this Granth) will get the understanding of the reality. [10]

(h) Everything is written (likhiya) in the Vel. [11]

(i) All means of remembrance are written (likhiya) in it.[12]

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SATPANTH LITERATURE IN KHOJKI MANUSCRIPTS

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Mumtaz Ali Tajddin Sadik Ali

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Most probably the practice of transcribing would have been limited to the Da'is working under the Pirs. These texts would be used by the Da'is themselves and copies to be placed in Jamat khana for reading and memorizing by the converts.

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MANUSCRIPTS

Very few manuscripts exist today which are more than a century old, the reasons are all too familiar, the environment, the general neglect and at times systematic destruction. In my seven years of study, I have had the opportunity of examining some sixty two manuscripts. Below are some of my notes regarding references to the earliest dates discovered so far.

One of the manuscripts that I examined was transcribed by a certain Devdas Khetta. The manuscript is in a remarkably good condition. The scribe gives the date of writing as 1902 and most probably at Ahmedabad. The manuscript contains the Granth `Anant Akhado' of Pir Hassan Kabirdin. While the Granth does not differ very much from the present printed version, there is an interesting note in the manuscript. The scribe narrates that; " Once I visited Jiraq in 1838 when I was twenty seven years old. There I saw a wooden box, belonging to the late Kamadia Bhimo, in the possession of Alarakhia Sumar. The box contained a turban, a robe, a wooden cane and a text of Ginans. I was only allowed to see some pages of the text which contained the `Das Avatar' of Pir sadardin and other Granths written in 1574 Samvat (1538 A.D.) by Kamadia Bhimo and his colleagues. I was told that it was used to cure diseases".

Another very old manuscript that I examined belonged to a certain Khoja Bhimji Pindidas dating back to 1594 Samvat (1538 A.D.). This manuscript contained one hundred and sixty Ginans, written on one hundred and ninety three pages. The condition of the manuscript is extremely poor, with many pages in an advance state of decay. The writing on some of the pages is illegible and the remaining text abounds in errors rendering many pages meaningless. A third very old manuscript that I examined belonged to a certain Rehmu Moloo of Nagpur. It seems that the scribe had used part of this book as a personal diary. The volume contains two hundred and thirty one pages of which some ninety are used for Ginans, the rest being reserved for his financial records. No dates for transcribing are explicitly given. However, two dates do creep up in the personal portion of the volume and probably reflect the date of writing. These are 1608 Samvat (1552 A.D.) and 1613 (1577 A. D.).

An Important manuscript that I had an opportunity to examine belonged to a certain Abdullah Meherali Dharamshi of Kutchh. The scribe gives the date of 1830 Samvat (1774 A. D.), however he notes that this volume was copied from an older manuscript of Chandubhai Lakhdir dating back to 1749 Samvat (1693 A. D.). Another noteworthy manuscript is that of a certain Bhagat Meru transcribed around 1902 Samvat (1846 A.D.). This manuscript contains an interesting note. The scribe narrates; "My grandfather, Piru Tikkam was well versed in Ginans and whose hand written text was in possession of Bhagat Rehmu of Sind. The volume had severely deteriorated, however, I was able to go there (Sind ?) before it was summoned to the flowing waters. Although I am sick and my hands are shaking, I was able to copy those pages which were still legible on this day of 1902". The reader should note that in those days it was a common practice to either bury or to throw an old manuscript in sea or river, once a new copy had been made. From a research point of view it is very disappointing to note that many manuscripts do not give any dates nor any names or information about the scribe.

It is also worth mentioning a common problem encountered in the study of Ginanic manuscripts; the corruption of words foreign to the scribe. Ginans being polyglot, not only contain words from several Indian languages, but also contain Arabic, Persian and Sindhi words. In Ginans it is quite common to see the ancient scribes misspell a foreign word. The misspelled word is then carried through by the subsequent copyists until it almost replaces the original word. The following table is not only meant to serve as an example, but also to help clarify some otherwise meaningless words.

AS FOUND IN MANUSCRIPTS	ORIGINAL WORD/ PHRASE	MEANING

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ARABIC

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maal haal maul-eman lahul mawla		one who has lord
to fil haal qul	fa lahul qul	he has everything
mer-e chit ko	mi rayatto	whatever I saw
mirasool	mur'sal	revealed one
masbha	misbah	lamp

PERSIAN

bhoj	buz	goat
gorakh	gurq	wolf
arushi	urusi	wedding

SINDHI

gadh	gad	with
vatr	vat	sowing season
natti	nathi	son-in-law

SANSKRIT

dis	disha	direction
baluk	balak	infant
savar	savver	quick

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HINDI

thun	than	place
jetr	jeet	victory
katha	kothi	warehouse

In addition the following proper names are often found in corrupted form;

PROPER NAME	AS FOUND IN MANUSCRIPT
Sind	Sung
Abuzar Ali	Bhudar Ali
Abdullah	Abhdalah
Islam Shah	Salam Shah
Multan	Mulstan

PRINTING OF GINANIC TEXTS

According to some accounts, Imam Aga Hassanali Shah ordered the collection of Ginan manuscripts some time after his arrival in India from Iran in 1842. According to one source this task was initiated around 1878 or 1880. Whereas according to other sources it was Imam Aga Ali Shah who ordered the collection. Finally it was during the time of Imam Sultan Mohammed Shah that the task of comparing, editing and compiling standard versions of the Ginans got under way by Mukhi Lalji Devraj and his colleagues. Initial volumes were lithographic. Printed editions followed after the establishment of `Khoja Sindhi Printing Press'. All the early editions were in Khojki.

Gujarati editions followed at a much later date. It seems that after the compilation of standard versions all the source manuscripts were destroyed. All the scholars [13-15] agree on this point, they only differ on the means of destruction. According to some they were burned, whereas according to others they were buried.

Over the years several lists of major Ginans and Granths have appeared including one by Mukhi Lalji Devraj himself [16] in 1922. Ivanow published three lists between 1936 and 1963 [17-19]. The latest is of Poonawalla [20]. It seems that all of these are incomplete. One reason could be that except for the first one, all relied on second hand information. The following list is believed to be complete, until hereto unknown Ginans are found.

I SATGUR NUR

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(a) Ginans : 9

(b) Granths : 1

1. Putla (222 distiches)

II PIR SHAMSH

(a) Ginans : 106 (including 28 Garbis).

(b) Granths : 9

1. Brahm Prakash (150 distiches)

2. Mulbandh no Achhodo (also known as Hans Hansli ni varta) (504 couplets)

Vel (31 couplets)

3. Chandrabann (50 sonnets)

Vel (12 sonnets)

4. Surbann (50 sonnets)

Vel (12 sonnets)

5. Raja Goverchand aakhiyana (295 verses)

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6. Raja Goverchandni benno aakhiyana (98 verses)

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7.	Mansamjamanni Vadi	(401 parts of 20 lines)
8.	Sloko Moto	(240 quatrains)
9.	Vaek Moto	(64 quatrains)
	Vel	(31 quatrains)

III PIR SADARDIN

(a) Ginans : 214

(b) Granths : 15

1.	Buj Nirinjan	(33 parts, total 581 lines)
2.	Aradh	(22 parts of 21 lines)
3.	Vinod	(22 verses)
4.	Athar Ved	(11 parts of prose)
5.	Surat Samachar	(5 pages of prose)
6.	Girbhavali Nani	(3 pages of prose)
7.	Girbhavali Shastra (Moti)	(17 pages of prose)

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8. Budh Avatar (525 verses)

9. Das Avatar (10 parts)

10. Moman Chitvenni [To munivarbhai Moti] (552 verses)

11. Bawan Gatti (52 parts)

12. Khat Nirinjan (2 parts in 132 distiches)

Vel (128 distiches)

13. Khat Darshan (3 parts in 235 verses)

Vel (81 verses)

14. Shiksha Patri

Bawan Bodh (54 verses)

So Kriya (100 verses)

Sahi Samranni (32 verses)

15. Sloko Nano (120 quatrains)

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IV PIR HASSAN KABIRDIN

(a) Ginans : 79

(b) Granths : 8

1. Gavantri (6 pages of prose)

2. Brahm Gavantri (2 pages of prose)

3. Hasnapuri (165 couplets)

Vel (84 couplets)

4. Anant Akhado (500 quatrains)

5. Anant na nav chhugga (90 quatrains in 9 parts)

6. Anant na viva (233 quatrains)

7. Satgur Nur na viva (222 verses)

8. Hassan Kabirdin ane Kanipa no samvad (13 pages of prose)

V SAYYED IMAM SHAH

(a) Ginans : 162

(b) Granths : 14

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1. Naklanki Gita (66 pages of prose)

2. Moman Chetamanni (630 verses of 5 lines each)

3. Athar Ved Gayantri (5 pages of prose)

4. Momin Chitvarnni (To Munivarbhai Nani) (323 quatrains)

5. Vis Tol (20 short parts)

6. Pandav no Parab (578 couplets)

7. Janatpuri (153 quatrains)

8. Mul Gayantri (Gayantri Moti) (50 pages)

9. Das Avatar Moto (1600 couplets)

10. Jannkar (487 couplets)

11. Mansamjamanni Nani (332 couplets)

    Vel (couplets)

    46 Sunnat (1 page of prose)

12. Mulbandh sol thal, Char chowk (17 Ginans in prose and verse)

13. Bai Budhai (collection of 71 short Ginans)

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14. Gugri na das Ginan (collection of 10 Ginans)

VI SAYYED NUR MOHAMMED SHAH

(a) Ginans : 0

(b) Granths : 2

1. Satvenni Moti (222 parts of 7 couplets each)

Vel (150 parts of 26 couplets each)

2. Satvarnni Moti (316 parts of 10 couplets each)

VI SAYYED AHMED SHAH

(a) Ginans : 0

(b) Granths : 1

1. Si Harfi (8 parts)

VII GINANS BY VARIOUS PIRS

(a) Pir Nasirdin : 1

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(b) Pir Saibdin : 5

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(c) Pir Tajdin : 1

(d) Pir Hashim Shah : 2

(e) Pir Ali Akbar Beg : 1

(f) Pir Ali Asgar Beg : 1

VIII GINANS BY VARIOUS SAYYEDS

(a) Sayyed Mohammed Shah : 9

(b) Sayyed Fazal Shah : 3

(c) Sayyed Miran Khan : 4

(d) Sayyed Addul Nabi : 2

(e) Sayyed Fateh Ali Shah : 2

(f) Sayyed Miran Mehdi : 2

(g) Sayyeda Imam Begum :10

(h) Sayyed Mitha Shah : 1

(i) Sayyed Rahemtullah : 1

(j) Sayyed Saleh Shah : 1

(k) Sayyed Miran Moh'd: : 1

(l) Sayyed Ladha Shah : 1

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(m) Sayyed Kutubdin : 1

(n) Sayyed Aal Imam : 1

(o) Sayyed Hussain : 1

(p) Sayyed Ghulam Ali Shah : 1

Sayyeda Imam Begum was the last the last descendants of our Pirs whose compositions are recognised as Ginans.

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